

The Chosen

Colossians 3:12-17

John 15: 9-17

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Colossians 3:12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

John 15: 9-17

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

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A charismatic fisherman drowning in debt, a troubled woman wrestling with real demons. A gifted tavern keeper ostracized by his family and his people. A religious leader struggling with his beliefs. A Jewish tax collector spying on them for the Romans and taking copious notes. A curious young girl bringing her friends to see this new storyteller.

These are just some of the people Jesus chose to follow him. Their stories, and the stories of many others, are told in the streaming series appropriately titled, *The Chosen*ⁱ. Now into season 3, the plan is to take 7 years to tell the 3 year story of Jesus' life and ministry. This series is unlike a grand and dramatic Cecil B. DeMille, Charlton Heston or Mel Gibson big screen movie which dramatizes the bible as its script, but instead the gospel stories are interwoven, overlaid and reordered to be told imaginatively through the eyes of Jesus' chosen ones as the narrative.

The show's creators crafted a story arcⁱⁱ which focuses more on the people who encountered and followed Jesus, how they viewed him through their eyes in ways that were personal, intimate, and immediate. This Christian historical drama is creative nonfiction at its finest. It is inspirational, not literal.

Much like the rock opera ‘*Jesus Christ Superstar*’ first did 50 years ago when Mary Magdalene sang, ‘*I Don’t Know How to Love Him*’ⁱⁱⁱ, *The Chosen* tells Jesus’ story from the view and experiences of those who became closest to him, those who knew him best. It also adds humanity, depth, complexity, context, dimension and background to the many biblical characters we know so well from the oh-so-familiar Scripture verses. The ones we often wonder why they said or did certain things, or we are baffled by their lack of understanding or we question how they could be fearful, so unaware, after all they had been first-hand witnesses to as Jesus’ intimate circle, his closest friends, or those who were the ones who vigorously sought to discredit and destroy him.

Meeting the dramatized disciples-to-be as they were before they met Jesus offers truth beyond fact, biography beyond realism, and flesh and bones beyond the printed page. It is these layers, however, that bring viewers deeper and deeper into the story—the one streaming and the one the Gospels tell. It makes Scripture passages come even more alive. We see their flaws, their weaknesses, their frustrations, their failures, their hopes, and their far-from-religious-leader qualities in a richer, up close way. And despite all of this, we see them called, we see them chosen. We hear Jesus’ loving words in a new way. “You are my friends. You did not choose me, but I chose you.”

The Chosen is a lens for us to see not only the ancient story, but our story, our being chosen, our call to abide in Jesus’ love. Are you drowning in debt---financial, emotional or spiritual? Jesus has chosen you. Are you troubled by the demons of mental health issues, of aging, of addiction, of despair, anxiety, depression? Jesus has chosen you. Are you ostracized by family and friends because of your beliefs? Jesus has chosen you. Are you on the fringes looking in yet not fitting in because of your past? Jesus has chosen you. Are you young in your faith and curious about the stories you are hearing? Jesus has chosen you.

Jesus chose his disciples, his followers, and he is still choosing. And when he does, he is continuing a long tradition that we see throughout scripture, and throughout the history of the church, of God choosing unlikely people to accomplish surprising tasks: David the lowly shepherd, Jonah who fled to the sea and a whale, Jeremiah called to be prophet yet saw himself as still a child, Ruth-a foreign widow, Mary-a very young woman engaged to an older carpenter, all begin a very long list.

Being chosen by Jesus has profound and far-reaching implications—although it says even more about the Chooser than those who were, who are, chosen. We are loved because he is love. His joy is in us because our joy is complete in him. We are chosen not because of who we are, but because of Whose we are. Chosen to abide in divine love, to dwell, to live deeply into this divine love. The disciples were chosen by Jesus for a distinct purpose, but they are not the only ones chosen. Scripture often reminds us that each and every one of us has also been chosen by God for a distinct purpose in this world, in our time.

Paul, formerly Saul, was certainly not someone anyone would imagine being chosen by God, yet he is considered the second biggest influence on Christianity beyond Jesus Christ. It is Paul who tells us that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world for a particular purpose, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life^{iv}. Paul reminds us that we are God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, called to abide in this love and life so deeply that we are clothed, covered, by it.

Being chosen is an invitation, not a command. We are invited into a life lived with love, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, forgiveness, patience, gratitude and the peace of

Christ. We are invited into a life in which we strive to keep God's commandments and bear fruit that will last.

Not all who are chosen will accept the invitation. Judas certainly said 'no,' as did the rich man^v who could not bear to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor, nor the thief^{vi} crucified alongside Christ who taunted him for failing to save them from death. Others still turn away.

Our baptism is our invitation as we are chosen by Jesus to bear the particular fruit that only we can bear, to do the particular task that only we can do. We did not choose this, but Jesus chose us and appointed us for this holy task.

James Laurence, in his 'Pastoral Ponderings^{vii},' says that "we all have our moments, of doubt, of course. Moments when we wonder what in the world we are doing with our lives; what on earth we are really here for. At least, I hope we do. I hope that we get real with ourselves in that way. I hope that we sometimes go below the surface of life to ask these hard questions. But if we dig down far enough, if we ask these questions persistently enough, we eventually get to the bottom, which is the very words that we heard in this reading, the words that God's people heard throughout scripture and throughout history. Joseph, Moses, David, Mary, Peter, you, me. Told by God over and over again that we have been chosen:

"You did not choose me, but I chose you."

We have been chosen to bear the fruit of God's love in this world, and to bear it in a way that no one else can. Friends of Jesus, what have you been chosen for in this time, in this world? Amen.

ⁱ <https://www.angel.com/watch/the-chosen>

ⁱⁱ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Chosen_\(TV_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Chosen_(TV_series))

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://genius.com/Yvonne-elliman-i-dont-know-how-to-love-him-lyrics>, written by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Weber

^{iv} Eph 1:4

^v Mt 19: 16-22

^{vi} Lk 23:32

^{vii} <https://mypastoralponderings.com/2021/05/08/chosen-by-jesus-my-sermon-on-john-159-17/>